

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
2362-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representative
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson:

As you work to structure the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we write to request that you include report language to assert the Department of Energy's role in advancing principles of equity and justice throughout our nation's energy system.

Marginalized communities — specifically communities of color, low-income communities, and other frontline communities — are disproportionately impacted by the health and environmental burdens associated with climate change and the consumption and production of energy. According to a study by the University of Washington and Stanford University, which examined the impact of power plant emissions on marginalized communities, Black and low-income people face the highest risk for death from emissions linked to energy production.

In order to combat climate change, our nation must work to establish a 21st century clean energy system that is accessible to all. Despite these lofty goals, race and class inequalities persist in the U.S.'s efforts to adopt and deploy lower-carbon energy solutions, like renewable power sources. This reality is underscored by a Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory study which reported that low-income households represent only 15 percent of U.S. solar photovoltaic adoptions, whereas moderate-income households represent 48 percent of adoptions.

In addition to environmental and health burdens, low-income households also experience financial burdens as a consequence of aging infrastructure and structural inequities within our energy system and nation by and large. According to the Department of Energy's (DOE) Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool, the national average energy burden, or the percentage of gross household income spent on energy costs, is three times higher for low-income households than for non-low-income households. In 2018, a reported one in five households had to reduce or forgo food, medicine, and other essential items as a result of this burden.

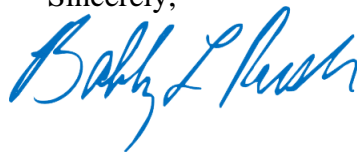
Historically, the Federal government has sought to alleviate energy burden and poverty through DOE and Department of Health and Human Services programs, such as the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). As you well know, the funding for these programs supports low-income households through financial assistance for heating and cooling as well as crucial energy conservation and efficiency measure installments. Though these programs have supported members of our communities throughout their hardships — especially throughout the ongoing pandemic — researchers and advocates have called for the expansion of these programs to meet the energy needs of our most vulnerable as energy costs and incomes continue to fluctuate.

Though WAP and LIHEAP have provided both long- and short-term solutions to help low-income households become energy secure, delivering a 21st century clean energy system to all communities will require the fullness of DOE's programmatic capabilities. We, therefore, request that you include the following report language in the FY22 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations bill:

Promoting Equitable Energy Systems – “The Committee recognizes the importance of establishing a 21st century clean energy system that will both combat climate change and institute principles of equity and justice in the U.S. energy system. The Committee supports the Department of Energy's (DOE) reforms towards this goal. In order to improve these practices at the Department, the Committee directs DOE to survey its current programs, policies, procedures, and rules to ensure that it is adequately meeting the clean energy, energy conservation, and energy efficiency needs of low-income, minority, other marginalized communities as determined by the Secretary, and shall report their findings to Congress.”

We appreciate your support of low-income, minority, and other marginalized communities in the clean energy transition as well as your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/
Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/
Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

/s/
Jamaal Bowman
Member of Congress

/s/
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

/s/
Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

/s/
Albio Sires
Member of Congress

/s/
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/
Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

/s/
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/
Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

/s/
Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/
Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/
Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress

/s/
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

/s/
Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

/s/
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress